

Milpitas Midtown Specific Plan
Draft Vision Statement and Goals
March 22, 2000

Vision Statement

The Midtown Milpitas Specific Plan presents a framework for growth, development and reinvestment in the city's industrial and commercial core for the next 20 years. The overall objectives for this area are to provide for the transition of the area to an attractive and economically vital district that accommodates a mixture of housing, shopping, employment, entertainment, cultural and recreational activities organized within a system of landscaped boulevards, streets and pedestrian/bicycle linkages. A walkable mixed-use district is planned along Main Street—this area is intended to serve as a gathering place for the community as a whole. The area will be served by a viable multi-modal transportation network, including light and heavy rail transit, bus, bicycle, pedestrian and automobile systems. New land uses and activities are being planned to support all of these modes of transportation. Higher density housing is a key land use in the Midtown area; new housing will support retail businesses, provide an 'around-the-clock-environment' and support transit investments being made in the area. Due to its central location and high level of transit accessibility, the Midtown area supports a greater intensity of residential and commercial development, particularly surrounding the transit stations and along Main Street.

Areawide Goals

The following draft goals for the Midtown area are based on the input received through extensive meetings with community leaders and the community at large. Through these meetings, several common themes were expressed in addition to numerous specific comments and suggestions for the area. The results of the meetings are documented in a separate memo. Overall, the most commonly cited issues are summarized as follows:

- Provide more housing.
- Improve land use mix and character of Main Street.
- Improve pedestrian, bicycle and bus circulation; connections to the transit stations are particularly important.
- Address traffic congestion.
- Develop parks and or open space.
- Address parking and traffic flow on Main Street.
- Plant more trees in general, add streetscape features to Main Street.
- Acknowledge historic buildings/features.
- Develop a community use, such as a library, performing arts center, amphitheater, etc. on Main Street.
- Do not squeeze out existing small businesses.

Based on these issues, the following Land Use, Community Design, Circulation and Implementation goals are recommended for the Milpitas Midtown area. These goals are intended to present the vision for the Midtown Area and provide the basis for the land use alternatives to be developed over the next several weeks.

Land Use

1. ***Encourage a compatible mixture of residential, retail, office, service-oriented commercial and industrial uses within Midtown Milpitas.*** Roughly thirty percent of the Milpitas Midtown area is comprised of land that is vacant or underutilized which, when redeveloped, can help transform the area to a more vibrant mixed-use district, and will contribute to the overall long term financial stability of the City. A variety of new uses are envisioned for the area, including housing, retail, office, and open space; however, the plan recognizes that there are many viable industrial and service-oriented businesses that are established in the area. New development in the area should be compatible with existing viable industrial and service-oriented commercial businesses that can be expected to remain in operation for the long-term
2. ***Provide for a significant component of new housing within the area in order to: improve the vitality of the Midtown area; address local and regional housing needs; and reinforce the use of transit.*** New higher-density residential development in the Midtown area is key to the achievement of several objectives for the planning area and the region as a whole. First, new residential development can add vitality and interest to the Midtown area by providing activity in both daytime and nighttime hours. New residents would support retail businesses, including a grocery store that is desired by existing residents in the area. Higher-density residential development within a convenient walking distance of the future transit stations will promote transit-ridership, and provide an alternative to congested freeways.
3. ***Promote an intensity of development in Midtown that is appropriate to its central location.*** Currently, the planning area is developed at very low densities; much of the area is dedicated to surface parking areas and storage functions. At the same time, the Midtown area is strategically located within Milpitas and the region as whole—it is adjacent to the “Golden Triangle” employment center of North San Jose; it is between I-880 and I-680; the area will soon be served by the Tasman Light Rail corridor as well as a potential heavy rail transit connection between Fremont BART and downtown San Jose. New urban infill development within Midtown Milpitas should be of an intensity that is appropriate to a central district served by transit.
4. ***Provide for a land use mix that supports major transit facilities.*** The midtown area is currently a major transfer point for existing bus transit lines, and very soon, the Midtown area will accommodate two stations along the Tasman LRT line. In addition, the Union Pacific corridor is being studied for future heavy rail service (ie., a BART or CalTrain type of system) connecting BART in Fremont to San Jose. New development around the transit centers should provide and appropriate mix of uses and activities that reinforce these projects, which represent a significant investment of public funds, and establish transit centers that are amenable facilities with attractive connections to the surrounding urban area.

Community Design

1. ***Create an attractive district that is uniquely Milpitas.*** The Midtown planning area has a tremendous opportunity to improve the overall image and livability of Milpitas. Milpitas currently lacks a central community gathering place where residents and visitors can stroll and linger in an attractive setting; a place where community festivals can be staged; a place that is identifiable as the “heart” of the community. In addition, the area is highly visible; that is, many pass through the area *enroute* to other destinations, and the planning area includes several important community gateways. High quality development, improved

streetscapes and a more diverse mix of land uses in Midtown will greatly improve the image and livability of Milpitas as a whole.

The Midtown area contains several landmarks that begin to contribute to a unique identity. These include Campbell's Corners, An-Jans, the Devries Home, the Senior Center, the Winsor Blacksmith Shop, older homes in the vicinity of Sinott Lane and the O'Tool Elm Trees. The plan should maintain the architectural and landscape elements that contribute to its identity and sense of history while introducing new structures and activities that can provide a visually interesting mix of old and new in the planning area. New development should be harmonious with older structures without falsely attempting to reproduce historic features.

2. ***Establish a pedestrian-oriented mixed-use district that is focused along Main Street.*** New development along Main Street and near the transit stations should be designed to be accessible and attractive to pedestrians. While Main Street (between Weller and Great Mall Parkway) is developed at an appropriate scale, most of the development along the street has been oriented to the automobile, at the expense of the pedestrian. Sidewalks are interrupted by driveways; parking areas adjoin the sidewalk; amenities such as landscaping, benches, open spaces are sparse. In addition, streets near the transit stations are very wide, lack landscaping and generally create barriers for pedestrians. The Midtown Specific Plan should promote development and streetscape improvements that enhance the pedestrian environment and connections throughout the planning area.
3. ***Provide urban open spaces (i.e., plazas, squares) that serve multiple purposes and can be used for special events.*** With a greater intensity of development and a diversity of uses, urban open spaces and "green linkages" (i.e., green streets and pedestrian/bicycle trails) should be developed to provide amenity in the area and a location for city celebrations and special events. The Midtown area is ideally suited for these types of places and activities, due to its central location within the city. The 'threads' for a cohesive open space system exist in the area—with future trails planned along the creeks, utility and railroad rights of way and potentially the Elm allee adjacent to the Fire Station.
4. ***Improve the character of streets within the area.*** In an urban setting, streets constitute a valuable open space resource; however, they are typically designed in a single-purpose fashion to accommodate automobile movement at the expense of other modes and without regard to their open space potential. In Midtown Milpitas, streets can be enhanced with landscaping and amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists, and viewed as an important component of the overall open space system.

Circulation

1. ***Improve the viability of the pedestrian, bicycle and transit systems.*** As described above, it is currently difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to navigate the area. Sidewalks lack amenity and do not exist in some areas; streets are very wide and difficult to cross; wide streets and high volumes of traffic pose obstacles to bicyclists; and the railroad tracks create a significant barrier to efficient east-west circulation. The plan should place a priority on improving the viability of non-vehicular modes of travel in the Midtown area, to offer greater choices to those who live, work and shop in the community. Connections across the barrier created by the Union Pacific railroad tracks should be explored for pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles, to improve accessibility to the Main Street area and circulation throughout the City.

2. ***Balance the need for through movement with livability and pedestrian-orientation.*** Milpitas is located at a significant regional ‘crossroads,’ and thereby experiences high volumes of regional through movement. In order to accommodate these demands, significant expenditures have been made to develop major automotive expressways. Despite these improvements, many intersections operate at poor levels of service during peak hours. In considering potential land uses and transportation improvements in the Midtown area, the plan should seek to strike a balance between regional through movement demands and the goals of developing a more livable Midtown district and a more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly transportation system.

Implementation

1. ***Identify ‘catalyst’ development sites.*** There are key sites within the Midtown area, because of their size and location, that hold the potential to set the ‘tone’ for the area and encourage further redevelopment and reinvestment in the area. The city should place a priority on identifying and encouraging the redevelopment of these sites.
2. ***Identify financial resources to create a plan that is economically self-sufficient.*** Over the long term, the plan should be economically self-sufficient; that is it should generate adequate revenue to cover the costs of public investment in the area. Implementation of the plan should be based on a mix of public and private investment. Public funds should be used for those projects that have the potential to stimulate further private investment in the area.
3. ***Establish the regulatory mechanisms necessary to implement the Specific Plan.*** It is anticipated that the Specific Plan will require a number of regulatory mechanisms for implementation. These may include the following: changes to the General Plan and zoning code; establishment or expansion of existing Redevelopment District(s); adoption of new design review guidelines and procedures.